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As I gaze out over the expanse of wild jungle and ocean, I recall our ground breaking ceremony nearly a decade ago. With the ink still fresh on the deed, our family excitedly gathered at the highest point of our 5 acres of pristine jungle. My dad stuck a shovel in the ground as my mom sprinkled tequila on a palm frond for good luck. Our tropical adventure had begun.

Today, our jungle home has become the Tailwind Jungle Lodge: a small eco-lodge, yoga retreat center and adventure business. We are delighted to host adventurous guests from all

over the world. Though we still return to our beloved Canada for summer, we now have roots firmly planted on the Pacific coastline just north of San Pancho, Mexico. We have traded in our snow shovels and hockey sticks for machetes and surf boards. Goodbye toques, hello flip flops!

I suppose that our story truly begins in the 60s with my father, "El Tigre," the surf bum. Though lucky enough to grow up on the spectacular Lake Memphremagog in the Eastern Townships of Quebec, my dad craved waves and palm trees. Not surprisingly, he pointed his motorcycle south and soon found himself riding the perfect waves of the "Mexican Malibu" on Punta de Mita, just north of Puerto Vallarta. El Tigre's love affair with Mexico was insatiable. Whenever the opportunity presented itself, we'd head to Puerto Escondido, Puerto Peñasco, Acapulca and, of course, to El Tigre's beloved Bahía de Banderas. My parents home schooled my brother and me for several years in the welcoming town of Bucerías, just north of Puerto Vallarta. Not surprisingly, the heavenly beaches and charming culture of Mexico are forever engrained in my childhood memories.

My father's passion for Mexico was contagious. During my final semester of college, I wrote a business plan for my family's dream business: an eco-lodge and adventure tour company in Mexico. We had often daydreamed sharing our love of Mexico with other adventurous travelers. We had the land, but needed a plan. On graduation day, I formally pitched the business plan to my family. The decision to adopt it was unanimous. We were off to the jungle to test our hand at entrepreneurship!

Before diving into our eco-lodge adventure, my father had other Mexico plans. I barely had time to take off my cap and gown before El Tigre, my brother (also a surf bum) and I headed to the Baja to launch our sea kayaks from the town of San Felipe. Thus began the 900 mile paddling expedition down the Sea of Cortez. Insane? Perhaps. When El Tigre declared that he wanted to spend his 60th birthday kayaking along a wild stretch of Mexican coastline, my brother and I were intrigued and willing.

After nearly 2 months of rigorous paddling (self-supported) and camping on isolated beaches, our journey ended in the lovely city of La Paz. Salty, bleached out and buff, we boarded the ferry to Mazatlan. Our long days on the ocean, and nights of campfires and stargazing had given us ample time to refine our eco-lodge vision. One thing was crystal clear - life on the ocean is much better when you have the wind at your back. Thus, the name "Tailwind" Jungle Lodge was born.

And so it began. We meticulously collected local rocks, wood, shells- any materials we deemed useful. Slowly, our eco-designs and the Tailwind Jungle Lodge took shape.

Rain water catchment and grey water recycling systems were established, magnificent (and heavy!) strangler fig posts were salvaged after the high winds of a tropical storm, and we did our best to minimize our impact as we perched our structures on the jungle hill side, giving each building a tree house 'feel.'

We officially opened for guests in 2007 and in 2009 we proudly became the first certified sustainable eco-lodge in Mexico (certification by Sustainable



Travel International). In 2012 we built a spectacular yoga platform overlooking the ocean and hosted our first yoga retreats and teacher trainings. Poco a poco, our jungle dream had come true. Natural living is the name of the game here--from natural building materials and wildlife, to margaritas made with all natural ingredients (lime, tequila, agave nectar and club soda...voilà!). Our love of natural living and sustainability also inspired us to support and encourage sustainable practices in our beloved community of San Pancho.

We have hosted a variety educational events and workshops in the jungle. We are also thrilled with the recent establishment of a local community center, EntreAmigos, a nonprofit that is devoted to the well-being and sustainability of San Pancho.

Today, the Tailwind Jungle Lodge is thriving as we host a variety of unique guests; from honeymooners and families to Yoga and Pilates retreaters. We've even had guests perform aerials in silks hung from the trees (former Cirque de Soleil performers!) The jungle offers something for everyone -- we offer a collection of 6 unique casitas, palapas and bungalows that together can accommodate up to 16 people. Our guests also enjoy a beautiful cove of white sand, only a 5 minute walk down a delightful jungle trail.

Looking for a sophisticated jungle experience? The Casita Pumita offers dramatic ocean/ jungle views, romantic rooftop decks and a luxurious canopied bed. Want something more rustic and natural? The Bungalow Parota is a wooden platform perched in the trees, adorned with a fully furnished canvas safari tent, outdoor shower, composting toilet and, of course, a hammock strung up between two palm trees.



Jungle living wouldn't be complete without the delights of the ocean. The Pacific is the icing on our already sweet jungle cake. We're always eager to show our guests the secrets of this amazing coastline. Not surprisingly, kayaking is our specialty and a favourite of our guests as well. Whales, rays, pelicans, flying fish, dolphins and secret beaches offer endless opportunity for adventure and exploration.

Stand up paddle surfing has also become one of our favourite activities. When the swell is up, we load the SUP boards onto our Jeep Wrangler and head to our local surf break to ride blissful waves (none other than the Mexican Malibu, the very spot where El Tigre first surfed 45 years ago). Many lifelong friendships stem from frolicking with our guests in the Mexican Pacific waves. We've even managed to teach grandkids and their grandparents to SUP surf waves together!

Though the word "bliss" is frequently used in our vocabulary, I have to admit that tropical living is not always rainbows and butterflies. Indeed, building and operating an eco-lodge is the epitome of a labor of love. Mother Nature puts us in our place regularly.

Blood, sweat and tears have been shed and yet my family and I agree that it's absolutely worth it. The challenge has made us stronger and has bonded us to this wild place. We simply can't imagine our lives anywhere else. Jungle living has given us health, inspiration, adventure, and the opportunity to share this lifestyle with our guests- today and into the distant future.

I suppose that the maple syrup in our veins has become diluted by coconut water and tequila. We're proud to be crazy Canadians living the jungle life and we look forward to sharing our jungle home with you.